



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

May 26, 2005

For immediate release

NOTE TO EDITORS AND NEWS DIRECTORS: Weekly beach monitoring data will be updated by Thursday afternoon each week. The information can be found at <http://www.iowadnr.com/> and by clicking the “Beach Monitoring” link on the left side.

- 1. Public’s help needed to improve water quality in the Cedar River basin**
- 2. Silver Lake water quality plan meeting on June 2**
- 3. Meeting on Black Hawk Creek water quality plan on June 6**

PUBLIC’S HELP NEEDED TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY IN THE CEDAR RIVER; PUBLIC MEETINGS ANNOUNCED

DES MOINES — From the Minnesota line to Mason City through Waverly to Cedar Rapids – the DNR is seeking your suggestions, comments and questions about how water quality in the Cedar River basin can be improved.

Whether you live near the Winnebago, Shell Rock or Cedar River, the quality of the water in those streams eventually affects the drinking water supply for many people including the residents of Cedar Rapids. That water supply is in trouble because of excess nitrates that come downstream from areas around Albert Lea, Minnesota, Charles City, Hampton, Vinton and Waterloo.

If you have concerns and questions about the rivers’ water quality or ideas to improve it, please send those comments to the DNR by June 3. Your ideas and concerns will be addressed at three public meetings. Residents can submit their questions and comments to Chris Van Gorp at chris.vangorp@dnr.state.ia.us, (515) 281-4216; or to Jerry Neppel at jerry.neppel@dnr.state.ia.us, (515) 42-6149.

“We hope people will submit questions, observations and comments early, and then come to the meetings to discuss the river and its health,” said Cris Van Gorp, DNR environmental specialist. “Sending comments in early will help us plan public meetings that can best address their concerns.”

These won’t be the typical government public meetings, Van Gorp added. We will build the topics around residents’ questions and concerns, with a chance for everyone to participate during the meetings.

Public meetings will be held in Waterloo, Cedar Rapids and Charles City at the following times and locations:

- Waterloo: June 6, 10 a.m., Hawkeye Community College, Room 106, Tama Hall.
- Cedar Rapids: June 6, 2 p.m., Kirkwood Community College, Amana Room, Iowa Hall.
- Charles City: June 7, 2 p.m., Charles City Public Library, 106 Milwaukee Mall.

Water quality monitoring shows that the Cedar River is impaired, or polluted, from where it meets McLeod Run to where Bear Creek enters the river just upstream of Cedar Rapids. However, the situation cannot be fixed without the help of people upstream who can address the water quality in their local streams.

With public help, water quality improvement plans are being developed to address waters across the state considered to be impaired. The DNR calculates how much of a pollutant a water body can receive and still maintain its designated use such as maintaining aquatic life, allowing body contact such as swimming or being used as a drinking water supply. Then it is up to people living in the river basins to develop and implement the plans.

In the case of the Cedar River, it is impaired because of high nitrate levels, which keeps the river from meeting its designated use as a drinking water supply for thousands of watershed residents. These people get their drinking water from the Cedar River directly or from shallow wells in sand and gravel deposits associated with the river.

Excessive levels of nitrate can make drinking water unsafe for pregnant women and infants under six months old, even if the water is used in infant formula or is boiled or filtered. Nitrates are water soluble and can make their way into water from runoff from farm fields, residential lawns and golf courses.

For more information, contact Chris Van Gorp at (515) 281-4216 or Kevin Baskins at (515) 281- 8395.

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SILVER LAKE WATER QUALITY PLAN UNDERWAY

NORTHWOOD — The Iowa DNR is seeking public input to improve the water quality at Silver Lake in Worth County.

A meeting is scheduled for June 2 to provide information on existing water quality and encourage input from the public who may have additional information and data concerning Silver Lake. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. at the USDA Service Center on Highway 65 on the south side of Northwood. The Worth County Conservation Board in cooperation with the Iowa DNR will be hosting the meeting.

Silver Lake is included on Iowa's 303(d) impaired waters list due to excess algae and turbidity impairments. The water quality improvement plan, also called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) will identify pollution sources, quantify the pollutant, and suggest improvements to the lake and land draining to the lake that would reduce the algae blooms and improve turbidity.

TMDLs calculate how much pollutant a water body can receive and maintain its designated uses. The designated uses for Silver Lake are primary contact recreation and wildlife and aquatic life support. Silver Lake is also designated as a High Quality Water Resource.

The Worth County Soil and Water Conservation District completed a watershed assessment in the spring of 2005 to evaluate the land uses and management practices in the Silver Lake Watershed. This information will be used to estimate soil erosion rates for the land draining into the lake and sedimentation rates for the lake.

In addition, a brief summary on the Cedar River TMDL for nitrate will also be presented. A meeting to discuss the Cedar River TMDL is scheduled for June 7 at 2 p.m. in the Charles City Public Library, 106 Milwaukee Mall.

For more information, contact Jerry Neppel at 515-242-6149 or by e-mail at jerry.neppel@dnr.state.ia.us.

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BLACK HAWK CREEK WATER QUALITY PLAN UNDERWAY

GRUNDY CENTER — The Iowa DNR is seeking public input to improve the water quality of Black Hawk Creek in Grundy and Black Hawk Counties.

A meeting is scheduled for June 6 to provide information on existing water quality and encourage input from the public who may have additional information and data concerning Black Hawk Creek. This meeting will be held in conjunction with the regularly-scheduled Grundy County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) meeting. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. in the district office at the USDA Service Center, 805 W 4th Street, Grundy Center. Staff from the Iowa DNR will give a presentation about the water quality concerns of Black Hawk Creek.

Black Hawk Creek is included on Iowa's 303(d) impaired waters list due to high levels of fecal coliform bacteria. The water quality improvement plan, also called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) will identify potential sources of the pollutant, quantify the pollutant, and suggest improvements to the creek and land draining to the creek that would reduce the amount of pollutant in the creek.

TMDLs calculate how much pollutant a water body can receive and maintain its designated uses. The designated uses for Black Hawk Creek are primary contact recreation and wildlife and aquatic life support.

In addition, a brief summary on the Cedar River TMDL for nitrate will also be presented. A meeting to discuss the Cedar River TMDL is scheduled for 10 a.m. on June 6 in Room 106, Tama Hall at Hawkeye Community College, Waterloo.

For more information, contact Chris Van Gorp at 515-281-4791 or by e-mail at chris.vangorp@dnr.state.ia.us.

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